

## **COVID-19, the Pandemic That Shut the World Down**

by Ashlyn Chambers, De Queen High School Senior

As I walked out of my high school on March 14, I was looking forward to my spring break, senior prom, and graduation. I had no idea that it was my last day at De Queen High School, and I was completely unprepared for what was about to happen. I think I can speak for everyone who is a part of the class of 2020 when I say that this was not the senior year we were expecting. We expected our senior year to slowly come to an end, allowing us time to process the end of this chapter of our lives. Many of us were looking forward to our last high school sports season as spring sports were just getting kicked off. However, no athletes were able to finish out their last spring season because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our high school experience was abruptly cut short, and the world was shut down with social distancing rules put in place.

During these difficult times, the resilience of the class of 2020 has come to light as we attempt to salvage every senior tradition possible. Recently, my hometown has been searching for ways to have a graduation ceremony by suggesting several non-traditional ideas, such as having an online broadcast or a drive-through event. However, as of now, we have opted to attempt to wait out the pandemic in hopes of having a traditional graduation in July. To add to the uniqueness of our situation in De Queen, our high school building is scheduled to be demolished in the coming weeks and replaced with a new one, so it feels as though we are leaving without a proper goodbye. Like the high school, many of our senior activities have been dismantled and transformed into online experiences. Through technological communications, I have recently completed all of my concurrent classes and have begun to prepare for my upcoming freshman year at the University of Central Arkansas. Most of our preparations for college have been canceled and transitioned into new online programs such as orientation events, roommate meetings, and class registrations. With social distancing rules still in place, it is questionable if we will even be able to attend college in person next fall. However, whatever the future holds, we will continue to innovate and achieve our goals in new ways.

Even though the seniors of 2020 are very disappointed about missing important milestones, we know that this pandemic has cost many lives, as well as disrupting everyone socially and economically. We are thankful for the numerous healthcare and frontline workers who have worked countless hours and for our government leaders who have had to make very difficult decisions to lead us during these trying times. As taxing as this experience has been, we are America, we are resilient, and we will get through this.